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Editorial: AHCA will hurt Trump voters

Last month, at a meeting of the country's governors in Washington, D.C., President Donald Trump promised a grand replacement for the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare. Though, he did express some vexation at the subject's intricacies.

"Now, I have to tell you, it's an unbelievably complex subject," he said. "Nobody knew health care could be so complicated."

Maybe he and the Republicans didn't, but surely former President Barack Obama and Congressional Democrats, who passed the ACA in 2010, did. For the past seven years the GOP, and Trump himself, made much political hay out of the idea of repealing Obamacare. Republicans in the House of Representatives voted around 60 times to get rid of it when their party was out of power in The White House.

As it turns out, simply repeating the word "no" is much easier than actually leading.

Republicans now hold all the levers of power in the nation's capital. There is nothing stopping them from making good on their promises, provided they have a plan for what comes next.

The ACA itself is an expanded version of a GOP plan introduced in 1993, Health Equity and Access Reform Today, which, as Politifact's Jon Greenburg pointed out, included: "an individual mandate; creation of purchasing pools; standardized benefits; vouchers for the poor to buy insurance; and a ban on denying coverage based on a pre-existing condition."

Added to that, Trump has over-promised and under-specified about any replacement.

"We're going to have great health care at a fraction of the cost, and you watch. It'll happen," he told supporters at a rally in October in Florida.

What to do?

Earlier this month, House Speaker Paul Ryan finally unleashed his party's answer: The American Health Care Act. Monday, the Congressional Budget Office issued its analysis of the bill, saying 24 million Americans would lose coverage by 2026. With a flat tax credit, instead of a progressive one, the AHCA would make coverage unaffordable for the most vulnerable.

“The forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer,” Trump said in his inaugural speech.

If the AHCA passes, it promises to directly target the very voters who led Trump and the GOP to victory in November. What happens next should be remembered by these “forgotten men and women.”